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**Subject:** Article: EPA backs Texas plan dropping coal plant emission controls

# EPA backs Texas plan dropping coal plant emission controls

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Martin Lake power plant, owned by Luminant Generation Co., in Texas. Luminant

EPA has given final approval to a Texas regional haze plan that allows an emissions trading program rather than direct new pollution control requirements for coal-fired power plants in the state.

Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler signed the rule Monday; the agency then cited it in a court filing yesterday in a 9-year-old lawsuit with the National Parks Conservation

Association and other environmental groups in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

The agency had proposed the plan two years ago after scuttling an Obama-era approach that would have required a number of Texas power plants to retrofit with new or upgraded scrubbers to reduce emissions of haze-forming sulfur dioxide (*Greenwire*, Aug. 24, 2018).

The regional haze program, dating back to 1999 in its current form, aims to restore visibility in 156 national parks and wilderness areas by 2064. Industry and Texas officials had objected and said the Obama-era approach's projected \$2 billion price tag wasn't worth the expected benefits. Some of those plants have since closed; the newly approved plan instead relies on an in-state emissions trading framework to reduce SO<sub>2</sub> releases.

When the trading plan was unveiled, critics objected that the overall annual cap on total power sector emissions was set so high that it would not require any individual plant to further cut pollution. While the final version contains some changes, Stephanie Kodish of the parks conservation association today accused EPA of flouting the law for industry's benefit.

Despite options for sharply reducing haze-forming pollution, "EPA and the state of Texas are refusing to require it, disregarding laws that protect the health of our national parks, as well as the people who visit them and nearby communities," Kodish, a senior director and clean air counsel for the group, said in a statement.

Texas' electricity industry belches more sulfur dioxide than that of any other state in the country; a 2018 Rice University study linked those emissions to about 300 premature deaths per year (*Greenwire*, Oct. 30, 2018).

As E&E News reported last year, the Martin Lake plant in East Texas, owned by Luminant Generation Co., was the nation's single-largest power sector producer of sulfur dioxide in 2018 (*Greenwire*, Sept. 26, 2019).